

Press release No. 1822  
25 January 1999

## **UN SECRETARY-GENERAL VISITS ICRC**

Geneva (ICRC) - On 25 January the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and by several senior officials. Also present was Mr George Weber, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In his welcoming remarks, the ICRC President paid tribute to the UN Secretary-General for his ongoing efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of armed conflicts throughout the world. He emphasized the need for the UN and the ICRC to maintain close ties, in particular between their field staff who, over the years, had established a spirit of cooperation and complementarity in the performance of their respective tasks while preserving their independence. He also drew attention to the significance of the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, which is to be celebrated this year.

In reply, Mr Annan reiterated his support for the ICRC and underscored the unique nature of its mandate to assist conflict victims. He deplored the fact that the humanitarian work carried out by the ICRC and the UN was too often used as a substitute for political action in coping with conflicts. Mr Annan also focused on the major challenges which the two organizations faced on the threshold of the 21st century in dealing with new forms of conflict and in responding to the ever-increasing humanitarian needs to which these conflicts gave rise. One of those challenges was to ensure compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law and respect for human rights.

In their subsequent working meeting, Mr Annan and Mr Sommaruga discussed various topics of common interest, such as the situations in Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq and Kosovo. They also touched on the question of the security of humanitarian workers in the field.

Before leaving, Mr Annan visited the garden of remembrance, which is dedicated to the memory of men and women who lost their lives in the course of their humanitarian work.

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**ICRC**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Press release No. 1823  
28 January 1999

### **COLOMBIAN VICE-PRESIDENT VISITS ICRC**

Geneva (ICRC) - On 28 January Colombian Vice-President Gustavo Bell Lemus, accompanied by Ms María Fernanda Campo, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador Camilo Reyes, the Colombian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, visited the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where he was received by ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga.

In his welcoming remarks, the ICRC President said he was honoured to receive Vice-President Bell Lemus and reiterated his sympathy for the victims of the recent earthquake in Colombia. He went on to commend the dialogue that President Andrés Pastrana had initiated with the players in the internal armed conflict with a view to establishing lasting peace in the country. Mr Sommaruga also mentioned the role of the ICRC in armed conflicts, the humanitarian values it defends, and the activities it has been conducting in Colombia since 1969. He concluded by drawing attention to the 50th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, which is to be celebrated this year.

In reply, Vice-President Bell Lemus paid tribute to the ICRC for its valuable humanitarian work and reaffirmed his support for its operations in aid of victims of the conflict which has been affecting his country for more than 40 years. He laid particular stress on the importance of the ICRC's role as a neutral intermediary in facilitating contacts between all the parties involved and in promoting respect for international humanitarian law.

Vice-President Bell Lemus and President Sommaruga had met the previous day at a round-table meeting on prospects for peace and humanitarian aid in Colombia, organized by the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

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Press release No. 1824  
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### **ICRC: NEW MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

Geneva (ICRC) - At its meeting on 22 June 1999 the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) co-opted two new members, Dr Jacqueline Avril and Professor Jean-Philippe Assal. This brings the membership of the Committee, which is composed of Swiss citizens, to 23.

Dr **Jacqueline Avril**, of Dardagny in the canton of Geneva, was born in 1948. She is a doctor of medicine from the University of Geneva and has a general practice in Carouge, Geneva. She is also a member of the Board and Secretary of the Council of the Physicians' Association of the Canton of Geneva. Between 1981 and 1994 Dr Avril carried out a number of missions for the ICRC.

Dr Avril's term of office as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross will begin on 1 September 1999.

Professor **Jean-Philippe Assal**, of Treytorrens in the canton of Vaud, was born in 1938. A medical doctor and professor of medicine, he runs the Division for Instruction in the Treatment of Chronic Diseases at the Geneva University Faculty of Medicine. He is also a member of the World Health Organization Committee of Experts on Diabetes, and was formerly a member of the Ethics Commission of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences.

Prof. Assal's term of office as a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross will begin on 15 August 1999.

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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

